



Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

4206 acres, representing 7% of Martha's Vineyard, have been conserved by the land bank since voters created it in 1986. Please visit them; maps are available at town halls and libraries; online at www.mvlandbank.com; and at the land bank office in Edgartown.

Acquisitions

A prize for the most wicked title? When Henry Bradley died in 1889 he left six children, who ignored his 5.0-acre woodlot on the Red Coat Hill Path. 120 years hence, the forgotten woodlot became a priority for the land bank, as it abutted its **Ripley's Field Preserve** — but by that time his heirs' heirs had had heirs. And most were untraceable. Through dint of effort the land bank managed to secure a quid of the title, at a cost of \$15,805; in 2024 the probate court, acting on behalf of the unknown balance and via a designated commissioner, sold the remainder to the land bank for \$291,276.30.

The land bank purchased the Chilmark Associates Trust's 5.4-acre pond lot off the East Pasture Road for \$995,000. Because the trust had used it for years as riparian access, the property, now named the **East Pasture Preserve**, came to the land bank already pre-managed, requiring only the upgrading of existing infrastructure. A stream, carved into the slope, wigwags under multiple boardwalks as it drips down to the salt-marsh.

Pimpneymouse Farm was divided among its heirs, five of whom opted to sell their portions into conservation. Four of the five are the children of Edith Potter, who served the land bank until 2015 — on the land bank commission starting in 1990 but on its Edgartown town advisory board starting at inception in 1986. The conservation area was trisected: the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation (SMF), the land bank's private-sector counterpart, purchased

83.2 acres, while the land bank added 56.1 acres to its existing *Poucha Pond Reservation* and consolidated 30.7 acres into a new property called *Trentfield Farm*. A mile of Poucha Pond shoreline was conserved in the former and 17 acres of arable land, ready for leasing, were protected in the latter. The land bank paid \$8,000,000.

SMF's Packard Preserve, on the Wasque Road, rises forty feet off its Katama Bay beach, with a westerly orientation over the water. The land bank bolstered the preserve by purchasing two lots at its rear, comprising 6.9 acres. The sellers of each — the heirs of Vance and Virginia Packard for the southerly lot and the Vineyard Open Land Foundation for the northerly — had been in litigation and the conservation sale quelled the dispute. The pricing was attractive ... and then the Packard family took the extra measure of donating back \$150,000. The land bank's total outlay was \$1,100,000 and the acreage has been assimilated into its *Quamox Preserve*. The purchase, combined with an earlier and generous gift of a trail easement from neighbor Harold Wilmerding, creates a 2.0-mile trail loop, which includes a stretch on the beach itself.

The town of Edgartown purchased the land bank's former office at **167 Main Street** in Edgartown center. The price, discounted by the land bank for the particular buyer, was \$1,550,000.

Land management

Ecological inventories and studies continued at many land bank properties: Aquinnah Headlands Preserve, Black Brook Preserve, Christiantown Woods Preserve, Cove Meadow Preserve, Eachpoquassit Hill Preserve, East Pasture Preserve, Edgartown Great Pond Beach, Gay Head Moraine, Great Rock Bight Preserve, Manaquayak Preserve, Ocean View Farm Preserve, Paint Mill Brook Preserve, Peaked Hill Reservation, Pecoy Point Preserve, Pennywise Preserve, Priester's Pond Preserve, Poucha Pond Reservation, Quenomica Preserve, Squibnocket Pond Reservation, Tashmoo Preserve, Tisbury Great Pond Beach, Tisbury Meadow Preserve, Trade Wind Fields Preserve, Trentfield Farm, Waskosim's Rock Reservation and Wilfrid's Pond Preserve.

Ponds figured prominently. Trails were installed or improved at Caleb's Pond (Caleb's Pond Preserve) and Menemsha Pond (East Pasture Preserve) ... but the premier pond event was the first-ever summertime access to the James Pond Preserve and its beach along Lamberts Cove.

Hundreds of pounds of scotch broom — glossy, florid, xenophonically invasive — were uprooted at the Three Ponds Reservation. On the opposite end of the island, an opposite clearing occurred: in order to create living space for the Vineyard-endemic cleft-leaved hawthorn, staff pared back encroaching vegetation. Vista management — to broaden scenic views — took place at the Farm Pond Preserve, Middle Ridge Preserve and Peaked Hill Reservation. Screening was supplied at James Pond and Christiantown Woods via cedars that were scooped out of the Little Duarte's Pond Preserve.

The war on rot continued. Staff replaced the entire Fulling Mill Brook Preserve boardwalk system, and likewise the Chilmark Pond Preserve beach-stairs. The old belvedere at the Gay Head Moraine was pulled down and new kayak racks replaced the originals at the Quammox Preserve.

At last, all of the permits necessary for public access to the Squibnocket Pond Reservation were obtained — from the commonwealth endangered species office and from the town planning board plan review committee and conservation commission. The first spade hit the ground in November. Staff installed the trail that connects the Christiantown Woods Preserve with the Vineyard Sound, via SMF's Cedar Tree Neck Sanctuary. If the land bank can someday succeed in connecting Christiantown and its Manaquayak Preserve a continuous trail will span from Vineyard Haven center to Cedar Tree Neck. Management plans were approved or updated for the Quenomica and Tashmoo Preserves.

The land bank tacked. Its goat herd, which served the institution well for nine years in keeping grassy its various wild fields, aged out and was sold at auction. Commissioners voted to swap goats for pineywoods cattle, who will strike the fields come spring 2025.

As usual, the land bank field crew continued ongoing general maintenance on various land bank properties across the island.

XIH

The 32nd annual XIH ranged 19.2 miles from the Hillman's Point Preserve to the Chilmark Pond Preserve. Approximately 135 people participated in the cross-island trek. Some 99 started; 42 completed the entire hike. The route passed along 17 conservation properties and five named ancient ways.

Budget and related matters

The following chart synthesizes the land bank's annual finances. Anyone wishing to review the budget in its entirety, which includes a narrative describing the purpose of each line item expenditure, is encouraged to read it on the land bank website:

	fiscal year 2024 budgeted	fiscal year 2024 actual	fiscal year 2025 budgeted
	cash amount and percentage of total	cash amount and percentage of total	cash amount and percentage of total
revenues	\$13,000,000	\$14,110,292	\$13,000,000 *
administrative expenses	(\$ 754,698) 6%	(\$ 684,990) 5%	(\$ 752,137) 6%
land management expenses	(\$ 2,771,535) 21%	(\$ 2,164,656) 15%	(\$ 3,120,099) 24%
debt service expenses	(\$ 8,190,837) 62%	(\$ 8,129,760) 58%	(\$ 8,390,487) 64%
reserve expenses	(\$ 50,000) 1%		(\$ 50,000) 0%
unencumbered new receipts	\$ 1,232,930 10%	\$ 3,130,887 22%	\$ 787,275 6%

As of December 1, 2024 the land bank treasury contained some \$12,100,000 in cash, to fund all expenses including new acquisitions and the payment of debt service for existing properties.

The asterisk (*) indicates the land bank's revenue projection.

Per statute, first-time homebuyers paid no land bank fee on purchase prices at or below \$900,000. This is called the "m" exemption and 36 transactions qualified for it in 2024. The 2025 threshold will likewise be \$900,000.

Gifts

The land bank gratefully accepted the following gifts: (1.) \$100 from Tammy Kallman, in memory of Wayne Kallman; (2.) \$50,000 from Carolyn and Randall Packard; (3.) \$50,000 from Cynthia and Harvey Richmond; and (4.) \$50,000 from Barbara Smith.

Transfer fee revenues

Fiscal Year 2024 transfer fee revenues were:

	transfer fee revenues received July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024	percent of total
Aquinnah fund	\$ 144,331	1 %
Chilmark fund	\$ 713,369	5 %
Edgartown fund	\$ 2,623,800	19 %
Oak Bluffs fund	\$ 1,365,851	10 %
Tisbury fund	\$ 1,485,343	10 %
West Tisbury fund	\$ 722,452	5 %
<i>central fund</i>	\$ 7,055,146	50%
	\$ 14,110,292	100%

This represented a 14% decrease over the previous year.

Commissioners and staff

One of the original "mothers of the land bank," Pamela Goff, representing Chilmark, decided after 13 terms not to run again; her leadership was long appreciated. And the land bank suffered another loss of leadership when its esteemed long-term counsel and advisor Ronald Rappaport died.

The land bank commission currently comprises the following members: Steven Ewing, Edgartown; Frederick Khedouri, Chilmark; Wesley Mott, commonwealth; Kristen Reimann, Oak Bluffs; Sarah Thulin, Aquinnah; Nancy Weaver, Tisbury; and Peter Wells, West Tisbury. The year-round land bank staff comprises the following individuals: Janette Andrews, fiscal officer; Winston Bell, livestock manager; Jean-Marc Dupon, conservation land assistant; Maureen Hill, office manager; Harrison Kisiel, land superintendent; Jeffrey Komarinetz, conservation land assistant; James Lengyel, executive director; Antone Lima, crew manager; Julie Russell, ecologist; Timothy Sheran, conservation land assistant; Blake Wasson, conservation land assistant; and Bryn Willingham, ecology assistant.

Respectfully submitted,

James Lengyel
Executive Director